



Stella Maris Primary School

Complaints Management Policy

Complaints are best addressed by students, parents, teachers, principals, Parish Priests and support staff working in partnership.

Our Catholic School's Beliefs and Values

At Stella Maris we strive to be a community of faith, hope and love where communication takes place in an environment of transparency, respect, compassion, tolerance and inclusion in the interests of all students.

Within the reality of the schooling experience, it is recognised that from time to time misunderstandings and differences will occur, and that these need to be resolved satisfactorily in partnership with members of our school community. Addressing such matters within a framework of dignity, respect and truth can provide powerful opportunities to model the love of Christ in the reality of our contemporary world.

Stella Maris Vision

Potential, Learning, Energy, Faith, Courage

At the heart of Stella Maris is the desire to develop the infinite potential of every person.

Learning is a journey of endless possibilities where we are energised to seek and explore questions about the world around us.

Nourished by a strong sense of belonging is the foundation upon which our community can flourish.

Through Jesus Christ, learning enlivens our Catholic Faith, so that we can live, learn and grow with 'courage always'.

The school's approach to handling concerns and complaints is based on our vision and our values of:

- providing a safe and supportive learning environment
- building relationships between students, parents and staff
- providing a safe working environment for staff

- using Restorative Practices when appropriate

Definition and Scope

A grievance or complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction with a real or perceived situation or outcome of an action taken, decision made, service provided or handling of an issue at Stella Maris school, where a response or resolution is expected.

The dissatisfaction may be based on a perception that the school has:

- done something wrong
- failed to do something it should have
- acted unfairly or inappropriately.

It may be about the school, an individual staff member, a student or about a policy or procedure.

Examples may include:

- issues related to student discipline procedures
- issues related to learning and teaching
- damage/loss of personal property
- bullying and harassment.

This Guidance focuses on grievances and complaints raised by parents, guardians, carers and students (complainant). It does not cover complaints:

- that are of a child protection nature which must be addressed in accordance with child protection laws and reporting obligations.
- from Stella Maris staff about aspects of their work or employment conditions. It is appropriate that schools handle these matters in accordance with the relevant Enterprise Agreement.

Child Protection Procedures

Nothing in this document replaces our school's obligations to comply with the legal requirements and procedures that relate to mandatory reporting and managing the risk of child abuse under the

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic.), the *Crimes Act 1958* (Vic.), the *Child Wellbeing and*

Safety Act 2005 (Vic.) and Ministerial Order No. 870 - Managing the Risk of Child Abuse in Schools made under the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Vic.).

Schools must abide by the professional, moral and legal obligations to implement child protection and child safety policies, protocols and practices within their school.

Ownership and Scope

The Principal and school will develop its policy to address complaints in collaboration with staff and the Stella Maris Education Board. These procedures take effect from April 2017

Expectations for all Parties

Stella Maris expects a person raising a complaint to:

- do so promptly, as soon as possible after the issue occurs
- provide complete and factual information about the concern or complaint
- maintain and respect the privacy and confidentiality of all parties
- acknowledge that a common goal is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties
- act in good faith, and in a calm and courteous manner
- show respect and understanding of each other's point of view and value difference, rather than judge and blame
- recognise that all parties have rights and responsibilities which must be balanced

Stella Maris will address complaints received from parents:

- confidentially
- courteously
- efficiently
- fairly
- promptly, or within the timeline agreed with the person with the complaint
- in accordance with due process, principles of natural justice and the Catholic Education Office's policies.

Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

The principles of natural justice and procedural fairness apply to all complaints and requires that:

- the rights of both sides to be heard and treated fairly
- the equal treatment of all parties to the dispute
- adequate communication and notice to be given to the parties outlining the process
- the person about whom the complaint is made is informed of the content of the complaint and, in most cases of the identity of the complainant at a point in time when it is clear what the issues are and who needs to respond to them
- the person about whom the complaint is made is given the opportunity to respond to any allegations investigations are conducted impartially, facts of the case substantiated and decisions are made without bias

Confidentiality

Stella Maris will treat your complaint with respect and sensitivity. However, it may not be possible that

all communications with us, or any documents you may supply to us, will necessarily be kept confidential. Although we endeavour to deal with complaints with appropriate discretion, we reserve our right to disclose details of the matter to other persons who in our opinion need to know them, in order to facilitate the resolution of the complaint.

Raising Complaints (Appendix 1 Stella Maris Complaints Resolution Diagram)

In the first instance, a complaint should be made to the school with a face to face meeting.

Students are encouraged to raise complaints with their classroom teacher in the context of everyday interactions. When a complaint is not addressed adequately face to face, the parents should telephone, visit or write to:

- the student's teacher will then address this issue but may communicate to the, Wellbeing Leader (Marg Cairns), Child Safety Officer (Sharon Hynes), Deputy Principal (Yvan Frederic) or Principal (Rob Horwood).

Generally:

- the classroom teacher will handle issues about learning and incidents that happened in their class or group
- the Student Wellbeing Leader or Deputy Principal will become involved if issues are more complex or students from several classes are involved
- the Student Safety Officer will address complaints about Child Safety
- the Deputy Principal will address issues relating to staff members or complex student issues
- the Principal will address issues relating to school policy, school management, staff members or very complex student issues
- the Parish Priest will address issues relating to parish policies and practices

The use of social media platforms to voice complaints is not recommended. In our experience this can undermine our school values of respectful communication and building community.

For contact details for any staff member, call the office on 95892641 or consult our website for email addresses.

If you are not sure who to contact, contact the Deputy Principal on 95892641.

Help with Raising Complaints

Complainants can seek the services of an advocate when they feel they are unable to express their concern clearly. An advocate can be a friend or someone who is available through an appropriate support organisation who does not receive a fee for service.

All parties involved in addressing a complaint may seek the services of a mediator when there is difficulty coming to an agreement.

A complainant who wishes to use these support services should ensure the person addressing the concern or complaint is aware of their intention and is in agreement.

Managing Parent Concerns and Complaints Information (Appendix 2 Complaint Form)

All complaints received will be recorded by the staff members involved.

- name and contact details (with permission) of the person with a complaint
- the date the concern was expressed or complaint made
- the form in which the concern or complaint was received (such as face-to-face, by telephone, in writing, by email)
- a brief description of the complaint
- details of the school officer responding to the complaint
- action taken on the complaint
- the outcome of action taken on the complaint
- any recommendations for future improvement in the school's policy or procedures.

However, in the first instance, when the complaint is easily resolved in a telephone call, a brief note in the school's/principal's/teacher's diary or computer recording the issue and the resolution may be all that is required.

Where appropriate, complaints may also be recorded in the school's student reporting database.

Addressing Complaints

Stella Maris will make every effort to resolve complaints.

A copy of the complaints procedures is on the school website.

All complaints will be noted and acted on promptly by the staff member who receives the complaint.

Stella Maris will acknowledge all complaints made. It will provide the complainant with a timeline for investigating the complaint. (Appendix 3 Sample Acknowledgement Letter to Complainant)

The Assistant Principal or Principal will investigate complaints that cannot be resolved by the classroom teacher and will provide a response to the complainant. Complaints about general school matters (such as the timing of events, school policies and facilities) will be addressed by the Principal or a relevant staff member. The school will make every attempt to resolve a complaint as quickly as possible. If your complaint involves many students and a range of issues, the school will need more time to investigate and resolve it.

Should the complaint involve complex issues, an initial face to face discussion is preferred. If a complex issue, the school might need to take advice from our Parish Priest (Father Denton) and/or the Catholic Education Office, which may take more time. Stella Maris will discuss with the complainant the new timeline for addressing the complaint and the reasons for any delays. In all cases, the school will try but not guarantee to resolve a complaint.

Resolution

If a complaint is substantiated in whole or part, all parties will offer an appropriate resolution. For example, at its discretion and depending on the circumstances, the school might offer:

- an explanation or further information about the issue
- mediation, counselling or other support
- a verbal or written apology, expression of regret or admission of fault
- to uphold the complaint and change its decision
- to change its policies, procedures or practices
- staff development or performance improvement

The school will implement the resolution as soon as practicable.

The agreed plan will be monitored

Complaint dismissed

A complaint can only be dismissed:

- after it has been investigated
- if an investigation has determined that the complaint cannot be substantiated

Complaint unresolved

A complaint is considered to be unresolved if the complainant does not agree on a course of action and/or a remedy, or if the remedy cannot be implemented.

It may not always be possible to fully resolve all complaints to the complainant's satisfaction. This could happen if the complainant has unrealistic expectations about the outcome of their complaint, or if the school, Catholic Education Office or Church's policies or regulations are contrary to their views.

Referral of Complaints

If a person with a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the school, they should contact our Parish Priest, Father Denton on 95892271.

If the matter cannot be resolved at the school level, or if the complaint is about the principal of the school, complainants may contact the relevant Catholic Education Office on 9532 1933 and the complaint will be handled in accordance with the respective Catholic Education Offices complaints policies.

Communication and Training

Stella Maris' procedures for addressing complaints is published on the school's website.

Stella Maris will:

- brief all members of staff (including volunteers) about its procedures to address complaints annually
- provide staff with (or provide access to) training and support appropriate to their responsibilities under the procedures

Monitoring the Parent Complaints Policy

Stella Maris will monitor parent complaints and consider issues raised through the parent complaints process, and any other relevant information from the parent opinion survey, when undertaking a review of the school's policies, procedures and operations.

The school will review its information about complaints made over time to:

- identify common or recurring issues that may need addressing
- assess the effectiveness of these and other procedures and whether they are being followed
- use information provided to the school through the parent opinion survey on the views of parents.

This policy is adapted from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's 'Addressing Parents' Concerns and Complaints Effectively: Policy and Guides,' Melbourne, 2009 with reference to Catholic Schools Organisational Guide

Office for Government School Education

Complaints Management: Practical Guide for Schools CECV 2017

Appendix 1: Complaint Resolution Diagram

Appendix 2: Complaint Form

Appendix 3: Sample Acknowledgement Letter to Complainant

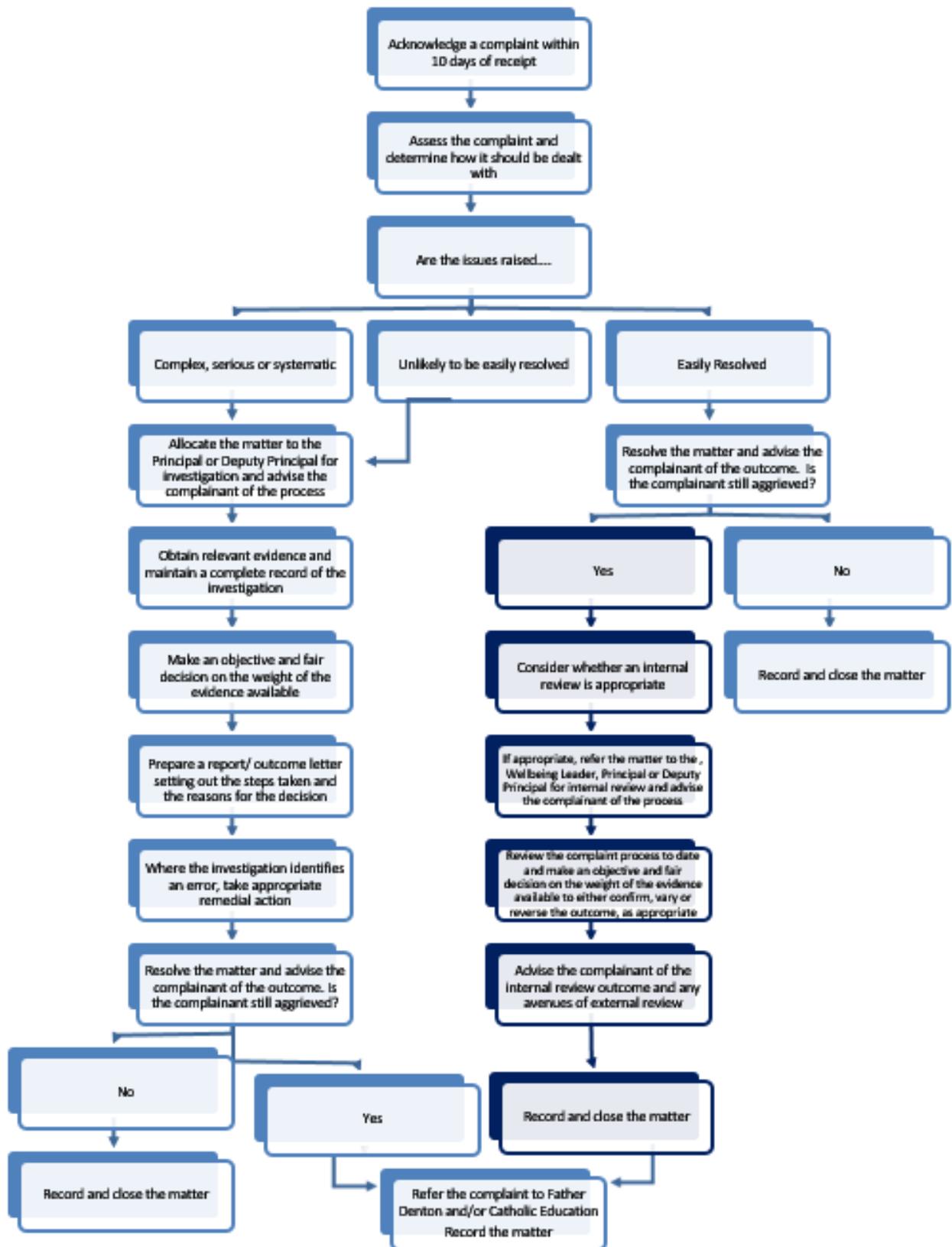


This policy was ratified in 2013

This policy will be reviewed in each review year

This policy was last updated in 2017

Appendix 1: Stella Maris Complaints Resolution Diagram



Appendix 2: Complaint Form

1. YOUR DETAILS	
Family Name	Given Name(s)
Address	
Contact Number	
Email or Fax	
2. YOU ARE: please tick)	3. THE COMPLAINT IS ABOUT: (Please tick & give details)
Student <input type="checkbox"/>	A school <input type="checkbox"/> Name of School
Parent/Carer <input type="checkbox"/>	Catholic Education Office <input type="checkbox"/> Specify location
Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Policy/Procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Policy
	Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
4 DETAILS OF THE COMPLAINT	
(Please attach addition page if space is insufficient.)	
5 DETAILS OF THE OUTCOME YOU ARE SEEKING	
(Please attach addition page if space is insufficient.)	
6. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY RAISED THIS CONCERN WITH A STAFF MEMBER? (PLEASE TICK)	
No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when?	
Who dealt with the matter?	
What was the result?	

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: Sample acknowledgement letter to complainant



Stella Maris School
A Catholic Co-Educational Parish Primary School
www.smbeaumaris.catholic.edu.au info@smbeaumaris.catholic.edu.au

113 Oak St
Beaumaris
Victoria 3193
Australia
ph: (03) 9589 2641
fax: (03) 9589 1628

Dear [NAME]

I refer to information provided by you/your son/your daughter, [child's name], to [name], [position], regarding the attached complaint.

The matter has been referred to me and I propose to deal with it by (state the process). Please let me know if you have any comments or requests about progressing the complaint to resolution.

You will be contacted at various stages of the process regarding progress of the complaint. If you require any information, please contact me on (telephone number).

Yours sincerely

Name

Date

Attachment complaint form